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INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE ETHNIC COMPOSITION IN SCHOOL AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE, SELF-ESTEEM AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Results of a comparative analysis of survey data in eight countries participating in EDUMIGROM research

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Summary

- EDUMIGROM survey data demonstrates that the impact of ethnic segregation/separation of students in school is far from evident. Various patterns of separation affect students' performance, self-esteem and aspirations towards further schooling and labour market participation quite differently, and, naturally, the wider social and structural circumstances seem to have a determining influence as well.
- EDUMIGROM comparative survey research reveals a divergence between new and old member states of the European Union in how ethnic background and school environment affect students' performance, self-esteem, and aspirations. In new EU member states, there are significant differences between ethnic minority and majority students studying in the same environment. In particular, ethnic background as well as the ethnic composition of a school influence students' performance, self-esteem, and aspirations. While old EU member states are by no means homogeneous, these relationships are generally not so pronounced.
- The most clear-cut relationship between a school's ethnic composition and respondents' performance, self-esteem, and aspirations is that the correlation between performance in school and self-esteem is not inherently positive. Minority ethnic students studying in schools that are dominated by the country's ethnic majority perform well and have high aspirations regarding further schooling and employment, but tend to have a more negative self-image and, in general, and feel less comfortable at school. By contrast, minority ethnic students have higher self-esteem and feel more comfortable in schools in which they form a majority, but perform poorly and have limited aspirations regarding their education or labour market participation. Both relationships are especially pronounced in countries in Central and Eastern Europe.
- The least favourable environment both for majority and minority ethnic students in terms of performance, self-esteem, and aspirations comprises schools where segregation is practised within the walls of the institution.
- Taking into account all aspects investigated within the EDUMIGROM research project, under certain conditions, an ethnically mixed school and class environment seems to best meet the needs of both majority and minority ethnic students. Mixed schools appear to provide students who perform well with opportunities to continue suitable education, and they also assist with the healthy development of students' self-esteem and interpersonal relationships.



Introduction

EDUMIGROM is a research project that aims to provide a comprehensive framework for exploring variations in the processes and outcomes of social and ethnic differentiation in schools and their broader educational environment in urban settings. The project examines majority/minority relations in ethnically diverse, urban communities, specifically with second-generation migrants and Roma, in old and new member states of the European Union. It approaches ethnic differences in education and prospects for youth from two distinct but interrelated perspectives: structures and identities. The project hypothesises that education, being a product and also a producer of structures in social, economic, cultural, and other power relations, is a vital agent in differentiation processes. At the same time, on a personal level, schools provide an important terrain through which identities are formed and self-esteem, inter-group and inter-ethnic relations, and group consciousness are constituted.

Until now, the development of self-esteem, identities, and inter-group relations among adolescents at school has been analysed mostly on the individual level and from a socio-psychological perspective (Breakwell 1983 and 1986, Phinney 1990, Tajfel 1974). EDUMIGROM's multi-level approach allows for a focus on the combined effects of macro- and micro-level factors, thereby facilitating our investigation of the ways in which macro-level structural forces affect micro-level interethnic relations, personal relations, and the development of self-esteem and self-value.

EDUMIGROM is a genuinely comprehensive research project, composed of three solidly interrelated building blocks. Its first phase included two background studies in each of the nine research countries: one on education in the national context (structures and functioning of the educational system, educational policies with a focus on ethnic minority youth at school) and the other on the history of inter-ethnic relations and prevailing policies. The second phase of the project proceeded with community based surveys among 14-17 year-old students at school, and the third phase embraces an in-depth qualitative community study of inter-ethnic communities in selected schools in each country.

This policy brief presents some of the structural (and policy) factors that lead to various constellations of differentiation between minority and majority ethnic students, as found by the background studies. Based on our survey results, it also provides insights into how such disparities might affect students' everyday lives, self-esteem, relationships with peers at school, aspirations for continuing education, and their long-term plans.

This policy brief, based on a preliminary comparative analysis of survey data collected during EDUMIGROM fieldwork, demonstrates the most prevalent inferences and results that will be refined during subsequent project phases and the complex processing of qualitative and quantitative data.

Structural mechanisms of separation

Substantial knowledge has been amassed about mechanisms that lead to the different educational paths accessible to students of dissimilar socio-economic backgrounds in contexts throughout Europe. Such differentiation frequently correlates with segregation along ethnic lines within institutions of compulsory education, especially in the early stages of schooling (OECD 2006).¹ Segregation is generated by several institutional mechanisms. On a systemic level, an important mechanism of socio-ethnic selection is generated by the designation (or, more precisely, malfunction) of catchment areas, by which the effects of residential segregation are often reinforced. This is especially the case in those countries and areas where the social, political, and cultural practices of ethnic separation across schools are due to geographical conditions (e.g. France, certain cities in Germany, and all countries in Central and Eastern Europe) although mechanisms of reinforcing the effect of residential separation might vary according to the range of experiencing the right to free choice of school. In other countries, we can discern a system that is utilised by policy-makers as a means of compensating for excessive social and ethnic divisions across schools: they make deliberate attempts at drawing the boundaries of catchment areas in a way that weakens ethnic and social separation of students among schools (i.e. Hungary). These policy attempts, however, are often circumvented by parents and other local actors of schooling. Still, certain cities, regions, or countries try to fight segregation by bussing students or providing free transportation for them to attend more distant schools, thereby allowing for a controlled mix of students of different ethnic backgrounds within schools (e.g. Copenhagen).

In several countries, the working of the school system and *early tracking* in particular result in the institutional departure of children of relatively low status (in terms of parents' education and labour market status) and minority ethnic background from their peers raised in higher status and majority

1 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) is conducted by OECD and implemented in a growing number of countries (43 in 2000 and 57 in 2006). It is an internationally standardised assessment of students' performance that was jointly developed by participating countries and administered to 15-year-olds in schools.

families.² As a consequence of early tracking, ethnic minority youth compose the bulk of the student body in those secondary vocational schools that function as the 'lowest track' in the realm of secondary education in Germany and in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. There is a substantial amount of information and analyses on how the early separation of ethnic minority (and socially disadvantaged) students due to early tracking affects school performance in general (OECD 2006 and 2007).

Another well-known routine that leads to segregation is to *direct children to special or remedial schools* that were originally designed for educating developmentally-challenged or special-needs children. In several countries covered by the EDUMIGROM research, the ethnic composition of such schools is characterised by a high, disproportionate presence of Roma and migrant children, most of whom do not require this kind of education (Berth and Klingner 2005, ERRC 2004, EUMAP 2007, Farkas 2007). Despite the fact that such segregation has been banned or seriously limited by national (and international) regulations in the past five years, the practice continues (see Drál' et al. 2008, Harbula et al. 2008, Katzorová et al. 2008, Molnár and Dupcsik 2008). Due to the restricted curriculum and often poor quality of teaching in these schools, there are few chances for students who attend them to proceed to secondary education and thus, to obtain marketable qualifications (Zentai 2009).³

Another example of how socially-disadvantaged (most typically Roma⁴) students are separated from other students is presented in the Slovak educational system, which induces separation through its 'zero-grade system'. Children from socially-disadvantaged families are directed into a *zero grade* at the age of five or six and are very often kept together throughout their entire primary school career, thus retaining separation from middle class and majority students (see Drál' et al. 2008). In Hungary, where the government expressed its clear commitment to

introduce anti-segregation measures in education and restricted the routine of streaming Roma children into special schools, the separation of Roma students within regular schools has become more salient (Messing, Neményi, and Szalai 2008, Molnár and Dupcsik 2008). Segregation within schools is realised through procedures attached to subject specialisations (e.g. children of middle-class families might be encouraged to specialise in math or in foreign languages, while children from socially-disadvantaged families are shepherded into physical training or art specialisations) or by grouping students into (different) classes according to their primary language.

We found that some Roma youth, especially those living in physically- and socially-segregated communities on the boundaries of urban areas, *drop out early*, before completing compulsory education, and are hardly present in the upper grades (6th–8th grades) of elementary school. This is the case in Romania, for instance, where the EDUMIGROM survey found a profound lack of Roma children in the 7th and 8th grades of schools situated in the catchment areas of Roma communities. To a lesser extent, these findings also apply to the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and, concerning Travellers, the UK (Fry et al. 2008, Fucik et al. 2010, Kusá et al. 2010, Szalai 2009 et al.). A reason for this is that children who have been kept behind several times during their school career, pedagogically-problematic children, and young pregnant mothers are exempted from attending classes. The very fact that a large proportion of Roma children are not present at later, but still compulsory grades of primary schooling leads to the conclusion that certain schools and local administrations in these areas tend to 'soften' the compulsory nature of primary education. In doing so, they tacitly contribute to the exclusion of the most deprived children – most frequently Roma and newly-arrived migrants – from schooling (Szalai 2008).

These fundamental, structural processes lead to various degrees of separation of minority ethnic students from their majority peers. In the next sections, we present some of the preliminary results on how ethnic separation – more precisely, differing degrees and diverse types of segregation – might affect school performance, self-esteem, inter-personal relationships, and plans about the futures of adolescent youth in the investigated communities.

On the EDUMIGROM survey

The EDUMIGROM survey was conducted among 5,086 students between the ages of 14–17 in schools of 17 urban communities in 8 countries. Within a larger set

2 In Germany, for example, children are tracked as early as at the age of 10. In Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, tracking children of the socio-economic elite into gymnasiums at the age of 10 and 12 ensures that the best-situated students are 'drained' from regular schools. Separating children into different school types does not take place until the age of 14–16 in most EU member states..

3 It is important to note that students attending special schools may only continue their education in special secondary schools.

4 In most of CEE countries, the registration of students' ethnic identity is forbidden by laws regulating data protection. Therefore, policies that aim to focus on Roma are targeted towards socially or multiply disadvantaged children, among whom Roma are massively over-represented.

of questions concerning broader ethnic relations, the research inquired about students' role models, self-esteem, feelings about school and studying in general, contact with peers and teachers, and aspirations concerning their future.⁵ Our research is suitable for studying the individual effects of ethnic separation due to the fact that the sample covers a wide range of situations in which ethnic minority children live and study.

Manifestations of ethnic composition and segregation in particular can be understood to fall along a continuum. Still, in our analysis of survey data, we had to conceptualise these phenomena. Thus, we differentiated among four types of interethnic school environments: majority schools (schools/classes, where the proportion of minority ethnic students is less than 10%); schools with a dominance of minority ethnic students (over 75%); mixed schools; and schools where there is a clear separation of students by ethnic background into parallel classes ('within-school segregation').⁶ Due to the different educational systems and varying patterns of interethnic co-habitation, our sampling encompassed schools with a range of ethnic configurations. Ethnic segregation by school was prevalent in the French, Danish, and Berlin samples, while ethnically mixed schools and classes were common in the samples in England and Hungary and two (other) urban sites in Germany. Schools with a high percentage of majority students were included only in the samples of the new EU member states. Ethnic segregation within an individual school was totally absent in Denmark and England, while it was common pattern in the Romanian sample.⁷

5 EDUMIGROM surveys are community-based samples in the participating eight countries. Sample sizes by country are: Czech Republic: 918, Denmark: 392; France: 512; Germany: 1200; Hungary: 611; Romania: 509; Slovakia: 510; UK: 434. The survey was run in ethnically diverse, urban communities, selected according to the following criteria: 1) schools should have a large presence of minority ethnic youth (Roma and/or second generation migrants) (2) students should be in a phase of their studies during which decisions about their future track are made. Consequently, our sample is by no means representative of the given countries' adolescent population, but provides a good indication of the everyday life at school of adolescent living in a multi-ethnic environment. Because of differing educational systems in these countries, site selection resulted in diverse constellations in terms of ethnic- and social composition and the type of schools. Also, the majority students surveyed differ from national cohort averages: most live in ethnically diverse environments, are of lower-status, and have parents with limited education and lower labour market status.

6 As explained in *EDUMIGROM Survey Studies*, ethnic background was 'calculated' based on questions in the survey questionnaire, whereby students were asked about their ethnic identity and about their parents' ethnic background.

7 For further details on the sample selection and sample

Peer-group relations

An important question concerns how the ethnic composition of schools and classes may affect peer-group relations and the general atmosphere in a class. It is obvious that much social learning occurs at school and consequently, the school environment – intentionally or unintentionally – influences inter-ethnic relations and the formation of identity and ethnic identity, in particular. Available literature demonstrates that the effects of desegregation on inter-group relationships are far from evident (Schofield 1991). The most important factors that appear to shape the effects are: the nature of desegregation (whether it is forced, voluntary or due to migration processes); whether ethnic differences are intertwined with status differences; the number of ethnic groups at school; and whether shared goals exist in an ethnically mixed student body. The most striking outcome of our analysis of the relationship between peer-group contacts and the ethnic composition of a class was the immense difference between new and old member states of the EU. While the inter-ethnic nature of peer-group relations of students attending segregated schools and classes in the new member states differed a great deal from students in ethnically mixed or majority environments, such differences did not exist or were minor in the old member states. It is revealing how differently the significance of ethnic background is valued by students in old and new member states. In old member states, ethnic background played a role in forming friendships for a small fraction of students (15%), and there was no difference in this regard between ethnic minority and majority students. In contrast, in new member states, almost one-third of the students mentioned that ethnicity played a role in forming friendships. It is also apparent that students attending schools with an ethnically mixed population are the most tolerant towards their schoolmates with different ethnic backgrounds.

When inquiring about activities with peers, students in the new EU member states mentioned much fewer common activities with peers of different ethnic backgrounds than did students in the old EU member states. Between 66% and 80% of the respondents in the old member states claimed that they did a range of activities (sitting together in the canteen, 'hanging out', visiting each others' homes) with classmates irrespective of ethnic differences. Everyday contact is significantly less frequent in new member states, where Roma seem to be excluded to a greater extent from everyday activities than students from migrant

description please consult the *EDUMIGROM Survey Studies or Comparative Papers*.

background in the old member states. Less than half of the students in new member states responded that they engage in various common activities with students of a different ethnic background.

Further, as EDUMIGROM data and analysis show, there is no significant difference in the perception of interethnic relationships between minority and majority respondents in old member states. In new member states, however, the majority of students reported that they avoid everyday contacts with Roma, whereas the responses of most Roma students indicated regular engagements with their majority peers. The reason for this deviation in the responses will be addressed more in-depth in the qualitative phase of EDUMIGROM research. However, based on our fieldwork experience and earlier work in inter-ethnic communities, it might not be premature to assume that the deviation may reflect students' avoidance of interethnic contacts on the side of the majority and a strong desire for acceptance and interethnic contacts on the side of the Roma. Restating the significance of ethnic composition on the institutional level, students attending ethnically segregated schools in new member states very rarely report activities done together with their majority peers. There is also a clear gender and social status difference in this respect: girls and students of lower-status families appear to be more open towards inter-ethnic relations than are boys, better-off students, or children of the ethnic majority.

Most probably, these results reflect inter-ethnic relations in the wider social environment. EDUMIGROM Background Reports on the history and contemporary status of interethnic relations in the participating countries (Law et al. 2009) demonstrate how new and old member states differ with regard to these relations in general. Compared to old member states, new members may be characterised by a relative weakness of democratic practices and civic life, deficiencies in effective minority rights protection, and tendencies toward ethnic exclusion; as a response to this, we can see a simultaneous enclosure of communities along 'homogeneous' ethnic lines.

When looking at how students think about the atmosphere in class, a clear difference between the old and new EU member states again appears. Students in the latter cluster reported negative experiences at a much higher rate than in the former. In the four CEE countries, 40% of responding students reported that the atmosphere in class was shaped by antagonism and 'hostile groups', while in old member states, the proportion of such answers was less than 30% on the average. This finding might be related to the different pedagogical traditions that, broadly speaking, separate the two parts of Europe: the authoritarian 'Prussian' style of teaching, and a style rooted in

democratic teaching method. The former, typical for schools in the four CEE countries, values discipline, individual competition, and hierarchical relationships, and is less likely to foster a relaxed and friendly atmosphere within a school or classroom. The latter builds upon the acceptance of variations in individual student capacities and promotes cooperation and skill development. Still, the solidarity among students is exactly a function of their opposition to adults in a culture where traditional authority is still institutionalised, yet also strongly contested.

Differences within Europe become sharper as more details are brought into the analysis. In old member states, there is no significant difference among students' responses in terms of their ethnicity or the type of school they attend. In the new member states, however, answers vary significantly along these two facets. Interestingly, majority students often sense hostility in their class, and Roma students attending ethnically segregated 'Roma' schools feel so the least. Bullying is reported much more frequently in schools where ethnic minority and majority children are taught in separate classes than in mixed arrangements. When differing ethnic composition of parallel classes is visible, inter-ethnic hostility becomes acute; furthermore, everyday experiences of being separated may deeply and negatively impact identity development of minority ethnic students in their formative years of adolescence.

Self-esteem

The cross-country comparative analysis of variables measuring the degree of self-esteem reveals that students in old member states show higher scores on average than their peers in CEE countries.⁸ In contrast to our hypotheses, in general, the degree of self-esteem does not correlate with ethnic background. (There are however, minor differences within individual countries in this respect.) At the same time, students' self-value appears to correlate significantly with the ethnic composition of their school. This is especially the case in new member states, where the lowest scores of self-esteem were measured among students studying in schools dominated by the ethnic majority. The reason behind this unexpected finding is most probably the 'boomerang effect' of high expectations and competitive atmosphere in these schools. Emphases on high performance, pressures on quick progress in studies, and good behaviour – to the detriment of personal or character development – create a stressful environment for the students in question. Students in

8 Respondents were asked to rank themselves on six different components of self-esteem. On each item, responses varied on a four-value scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

low-prestige schools with a sizable Roma population are under less stress to perform well; therefore, their self-evaluation may be less influenced by their actual school results. However, the price they pay for the more relaxed school years is high: they have very few choices but to continue studying in low-standard, vocational schools. Thus, they have dramatically curtailed opportunities for eventual employment and a successful adult career.

Another important factor that potentially influences the discrepancies discerned in the degrees of students' self-esteem by country is the variation of school systems of participating countries. Students in CEE countries participating in the survey were in the most demanding period of their studies, when decisions about advancement into secondary education were to be made. As a rule, the process of selecting and getting acceptance to attend a secondary-level institution is extremely competitive in the involved countries; students who want to be accepted into a prestigious secondary school must excel. This constantly competitive environment affects students' self-evaluation: they might question or devalue themselves – temporarily, at least. We see this dynamic first and foremost in schools with relatively low proportions of Roma. However, circumstances are different in schools with a high proportion of Roma children, where teachers do not expect the students to enter the arena of intense competition for good placement in secondary education. With regard to schools in old member states, students did not face such a stressful period at the time of the survey.⁹

In new member states, levels of self-appreciation are the lowest among those ethnic minority students who study in a majority environment. This relationship indicates that those few Roma students who manage to study at a prestigious primary school that offers good opportunities for upward mobility seem to pay a high price for their educational success: their self-esteem is seriously damaged in comparison to both their majority and minority peers. We anticipate that the qualitative research of the EDUMIGROM project will reveal details and specificities of this phenomenon.

Academic performance

The EDUMIGROM survey measured the self-assessed academic performance¹⁰ of students. Data show that

9 In the UK and Denmark, the survey was conducted in comprehensive schools, where students study together during their compulsory schooling; in Germany, selection took place much earlier (at the age of 12); and in France the survey was run in secondary schools serving primarily minority ethnic students.

10 Performance was measured on the ground of students' stated grades in various subjects in the preceding semester or term.

even though ethnic minority students perform worse in comparison to their majority peers in general, performance correlates more strongly with the composition of the school and the class in particular than with students' ethnic identity. Both ethnic minority and majority students perform relatively well in 'majority' schools, and both groups of students perform poorly in schools where segregation is paramount either because the vast majority of students are 'visible' minorities,¹¹ or because parallel classes are composed of different ethnic groups. The performance of students is higher in schools where solely or dominantly ethnic minorities are present ('Roma schools', 'Muslim schools') than in schools where ethnic separation is an outcome of varied practices of streaming of internal segregation. This is probably due to distinct factors in the cases of new and old member states. Academic expectations of teachers in segregated Roma schools are considerably lower than in regular schools, coursework grading is more flexible and permissive, and the standard curriculum is comparatively lower. That said, ethnic separation in old member states is occasionally due to the presence of voluntary segregation (i.e. Muslim schools in Denmark), where students and parents have competence in making strategic educational choices and the performance of students is comparatively high (Thomsen, Kallehave, and Moldenhawer 2010).¹² In formal terms, these schools count as 'ethnically segregated', but they obviously raise the average performance scores in countries where 'voluntary segregation' exists. Performance of students studying in ethnically mixed environments proved to be on the average in both group of countries.

A more objective indicator of academic performance (and poor performance in particular) is whether a student had been kept behind at least once during his or her entire school career. In some countries, the frequency and significance of repeating a grade does relate to the individual traditions of various countries (and is a very usual);¹³ in others, it is very

11 We understand 'visible' minorities as youth who bear certain socially interpreted, typically unalterable markers of difference that qualify for high probability of being 'othered'.

12 'Voluntary segregation' is used by the EDUMIGROM Consortium to refer to a certain category of schools, which are established by or in accordance with the will of parents or the minority community. Examples include Muslim faith schools in old member states and the 'Ghandi' Roma secondary school in Hungary. Voluntary segregation does not refer to cases when parents select a 'regular' school and wish to have their children accepted to this school.

13 In France, for example, students are often kept back due to the decision of their parents before streaming takes place, in order to get better marks next year, and qualify for a higher prestige

rarely practised and its occurrence clearly indicates serious problems. Along these lines, a comparison of schools with varying student compositions is telling. There appear to be two significant variations. One is represented by the new member states where teaching traditions are based on discipline and hierarchical relations, and grade repetition is indicative of deficient performance and academic failure. In these countries, there is a very significant difference (with a multiplier of five!) in the proportion of ethnic minority and ethnic majority students who repeat a grade. A clearly different pattern is represented by old member states where, by comparison, the respective difference is insignificant: 16% of majority and 20% of ethnic minority students repeated a grade during their school careers.

Another important finding is that students attending segregated institutions or segregated classes tend to repeat a grade significantly more frequently than other students, which is a clear indication of the low quality and prestige of such schools (or classes). It should be noted that in ethnically segregated environments in old member states, the few ethnic majority students perform worse and repeat a grade more frequently than their peers. In the new member states, meanwhile, irrespective of the ethnic composition of the school, Roma students are required to repeat a grade far more than other students. Their situation is worst in schools where ethnic separation within the individual institution is pronounced. These findings imply, importantly, that the ethnic composition of a school or a class has a very strong effect on students' performance, regardless of whether the student studying in such an environment actually belongs to a minority ethnic group.

Prospects and aspirations

One of EDUMIGROM's major foci in the survey research has been to explore the aspirations and expectations of adolescents towards adult life. The survey, within the limits of the method,¹⁴ looked into this matter, although the currently ongoing qualitative phase of the project will deepen our understanding of the issue. Concerning short-term plans, the vast majority of students responded that they intend to continue studying. There are some important deviations, however. In old member states, the ethnic background of students did not make a difference in their stated

willingness to continue studying: minority ethnic adolescents and majority students were similar in their intentions to go on with their studies. In new member states, however, ethnic background mattered a great deal: the proportion of Roma who planned to end their education was twice as high that of majority students: over one-fifth of Roma students responded that they thought they would stop studying after primary school, while this ratio was less than 10% among their majority peers.

A more profound relationship becomes apparent when analysing ethnic composition of the educational environment: it is not ethnicity on its own that correlates with the desire to continue education, but the ethnic composition of the school/class – and the association is particularly strong in new member states. Both Roma and ethnic majority students studying in segregated 'Roma' schools or schools with ethnically separated, parallel classes plan to continue education at a significantly lower rate than do students attending schools of ethnically mixed or dominantly majority student population. Internal separation of ethnic minority students seems to be equally de-motivating for students in all parts of Europe examined by EDUMIGROM. The nature of separation also matters. At schools in which ethnic groups 'voluntarily' separate (i.e. Muslim schools in Denmark), students perform well and have much higher aspirations about continuing their education. In contrast, in schools where separation has resulted from involuntary processes or, simply, a lack of choices, students appear to be much less interested in continuing to study. The dividing line between aspiring and not aspiring to continue education is induced by the presence of separation (either inter- or intra-school) in new member states and by the everyday visibility of ethnic separation (intra-school segregation) in old member states.

With regard to longer-term plans, similar patterns reveal themselves. There is a salient difference among Roma and majority students in the new member states concerning the type of job they envisage for themselves: the percentage of Roma expecting to have a white-collar job is less than half that of their non-Roma peers. At the same time, ethnic background does not play a major role in these differences: again, in old member states, ethnic minority students and their majority peers studying in the same environment have similar expectations towards their eventual labour market position. The analysis found that, again, it is not ethnic background on its own, but an ethnically segregated school environment that has a role in shaping the lower job aspirations of certain students. This result is not surprising in the light of the above presented findings about the devastating effects of

secondary school tracks.

¹⁴The questionnaire included a number of questions about respondents' expectations, views on their future adult life (work, family, place of residence). Answers provided for these questions present just a hint of the most important factor shaping life, but they still show certain specificities.

school segregation on academic performance. As a discouraging consequence, students studying in such environments have lower-than-average ambitions towards later labour market positions and careers.

Summary

First results of the comparative analysis of the EDUMIGROM survey data reveal major differences between the new and old member states in how ethnic backgrounds of students and the ethnic composition of schools affect students' performance, ambitions, future aspirations, feelings of comfort at school, inter-personal and inter-ethnic relationships, and their self-esteem or self-evaluation. The difference between Western and Central European countries may be grasped by the width of the gap between majority and minority ethnic students in all of the above aspects. While in the old member states, ethnic background has little or no impact on students studying in the same school environment, in the new member states, differences between Roma and their majority peers are significant in all the examined aspects. Ethnic composition of a school has a greater impact in the new than in old member states, as well. Possible explanations for the discrepancies experienced between students in the old and the new member-states stem from four independent factors: the dissimilar structures of educational systems, the differing histories of inter-ethnic relations, the nature of ethnic separation (the presence or lack of voluntary segregation), and, in part, in methodological reasons.

Another significant result of the preliminary comparative analysis of EDUMIGROM survey data is that it demonstrates that the impact of ethnic segregation/separation of students in school is far from evident. Various patterns of separation affect students' performance, self-esteem and aspirations towards further schooling and labour market participation quite differently, and, naturally, the wider social and structural circumstances seem to have a determining influence as well.

Positive self-esteem and school performance together with high aspirations seem not to be directly linked. Students, especially minority ethnic students studying in schools dominated by the ethnic majority, perform well, and have high aspirations toward continuing education and finding a good position on the labour market. However, they tend to have a more negative self-image and feel less comfortable at school. Contrariwise, high self-esteem, positive identity and feeling comfortable at school are more frequent among students who study in schools that are attended overwhelmingly by minority students. In these schools academic

performance is low and students have limited aspirations to continue education and to get a white-collar job. This reverse relation is especially sharp in the participating CEE countries. There are certain exceptions to this, though, especially if we regard the source of separation. For those schools where ethnic separation is due to the active participation and explicit will of parents, the contrary is the case: Islamic schools, for example, seem to provide high educational standards, engender high expectations among students, and also allow for positive self-esteem and peer relations.

Minority ethnic students feel more comfortable in environments in which they form the majority: they feel safe, are acquainted with the rules, norms, expectations, and do not tend to fear prejudice and hostility from majority peers. Youth and adults who live and were socialised in ethnically segregated, and often also socially marginalised, communities navigate relatively easily in the 'world' of an ethnically segregated school. At the same time, schools that represent cases of involuntary separation often serve as 'dead-ends' for a students' educational career: students studying in such schools have very limited chances to continue into mainstream secondary schools that would provide access to successful labour market participation.

A rather obvious pattern outlined by the survey concerns the situation of ethnic minority students studying in a dominantly majority environment in the new member states. It seems quite clear that compared to their peers in segregated or ethnically mixed environments, they perform much better and also have high aspirations for upward mobility. However, they often pay a price of sorts: among all students, they have the lowest self-esteem and feel the least comfortable in their school environment. Roma students studying in relatively prestigious primary schools also have better chances to continue studying in a school-type in the higher segments of secondary education than do their peers, but often, they seem to be exposed to hostility and bullying by majority students, as well as frequent exclusion both in the school and in their minority home environment. Survey results indicate that studying in a predominantly majority environment has damaging effects on minority students' self-esteem, but further analysis of the qualitative data will certainly flesh out the phenomenon more.

Another important pattern uncovered by the comparative analysis of survey data is that the least favourable environment – in terms of self-esteem, identity-building, performance, aspirations – is represented by schools where segregation takes place within the walls of the institution. Even

if separation results from, for instance, student performance or specialisation (whereby students might attend parallel classes dominated by one ethnic group), everyday experiences of separation and differentiation along ethnic lines – can be disruptive to a student's identity and it may negatively influence his or her self-esteem and self-respect. Separation and differentiation often leads to unfriendly relationships within a school, frequent rivalries, bullying and even violence, while the performance of students visiting parallel classes often diverges markedly. In such schools, however, students studying in the 'ethnic minority class' have low chances to continue education in prestigious secondary schools. This is because of the usually huge gap in performance and quality between the parallel classes and the behavioural problems that are caused

at least partly by insults related to identity. These issues will be focused on in-depth by the current qualitative phase of the EDUMIGROM research.

Generally speaking, and taking into account all aspects analysed in this brief, ethnically mixed school environments seem to best meet the needs of both majority and minority ethnic students. These schools (and classrooms), even if they are of average quality, seem to provide opportunities for well-performing students to proceed to prestigious secondary educational tracks, thereby improving their career prospects and provide good grounds for developing inter-ethnic personal networks, that prove to be essential for successful labour market participation. These schools also appear to contribute to the healthy development of the self-esteem and identity of adolescent students.

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About EDUMIGROM

The initiative on 'Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe' (EDUMIGROM) is a collaborative research project under the auspices of the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme (Grant Agreement 217384). The project aims to study how ethnic differences in education contribute to the diverging prospects for minority ethnic youth and their peers in urban settings. It is a comparative endeavour involving nine countries from among old and new member states of the European Union, including Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. EDUMIGROM began in March 2008 and will run through February 2011.

About EDUMIGROM outputs

The EDUMIGROM research project plans to produce a variety of outputs connected to its research agenda: country studies, comparative reports, policy briefs, a series of occasional papers, newsletters and other publications, which are intended to provide background and stimulate discussion on issues related to the education and integration of minority ethnic youth in Europe.

We encourage dissemination and duplication of this Policy Brief, with proper acknowledgment.

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